



February 25, 2021

Ms. Gina McCarthy
National Climate Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. Brian C. Deese
Assistant to the President for Economic Policy
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. McCarthy and Mr. Deese:

As vice chairman (the chairmanship currently is vacant) of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), I am writing to you in your capacity as co-chairs of the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization (Interagency Working Group). Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the ACHP's mission is to promote the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of our nation's diverse historic resources, and to advise the President and the Congress on national historic preservation policy. The ACHP would like to encourage the Interagency Working Group to address the economic benefits of historic preservation and heritage tourism in its report to the President on prioritizing federal programs to support and revitalize the economies of coal and power plant communities.

Executive Order 13287, "Preserve America," issued in 2003, calls upon federal agencies to provide leadership in preserving America's heritage through their stewardship of federally owned historic properties. The Executive Order goes a step further, however, and directs agencies to seek partnerships with state and local governments, Indian tribes, and the private sector to promote economic development and vitality in local communities through the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties. In addition, Executive Order 13287 calls on the Department of Commerce to assist states, Indian tribes, and local communities in promoting the use of historic properties for heritage tourism. Likewise, all federal agencies are directed to use the historic properties in their ownership in conjunction with state, tribal, and local tourism programs to foster viable economic partnerships.

Undergirding the policy direction of Executive Order 13287 are numerous studies that show preservation of historic properties is a powerful economic development tool. Historic preservation stimulates job creation, boosts tax revenue, improves quality of life, and can help strengthen regional identity and local pride. Reuse of historic properties also is central to heritage tourism, the business of attracting visitors to a community based on the locale's unique history and culture. Attracting visitors to a community is a good source of revenue and creates jobs. Capitalizing on historic properties through heritage tourism also can help a community diversify its economy, particularly for those that previously have been dependent on one industry.

Federal investment in historic preservation and heritage tourism in coal and power plant communities would assist not only in the economic recovery of those communities, but also their social recovery. Preservation and reuse of the places that defined the history of these communities for so many years

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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recognizes the importance of that history while serving as a bridge to the future. For example, several communities in Harlan County, Kentucky, have rehabilitated historic properties associated with their history as coal mining company towns and are leveraging them as heritage tourism assets. In Benham, the 1923 commissary is now the Kentucky Coal Museum, and the 1926 school has become the Benham Schoolhouse Inn. In nearby Lynch, the Portal 31 Mine and associated buildings have been opened to the public for tours, including an underground tour of the mine.

There are federal grant and other assistance programs targeted specifically to preservation of historic properties, notably in the Department of the Interior. However there are many other federal programs that can (and do) support historic preservation and heritage tourism. I hope the Interagency Working Group will include a discussion of this opportunity and the existing policy directives of Executive Order 13287 in its upcoming report to the President.

Should you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me, or your staff may wish to follow up with ACHP Executive Director John Fowler at jfowler@achp.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rick Gonzalez', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Rick Gonzalez, AIA
Vice Chairman